

Some Derbyshire Fonts.

BY G. LE BLANC SMITH in *The Reliquary*, October, 1901.

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IN the above paper Mr. Le Blanc Smith has selected for notation six fonts which will appeal to the sentiment of every true Derbyshire ecclesiologist, and by the courtesy of the proprietors of *The Reliquary* we are enabled to reproduce an illustration of each,



Fig. 1.—Font at Youlgreave.

remarkable for its clearness of photographic detail. The author deals with his subject throughout in a confident and concise method peculiarly his own, and welcome, even in theoretical archæology.

I.—The font at Youlgreave, we are told, is of the Norman period, and “unique in the possession of a projective ‘stoup’ or ‘chrismatory,’ and, unlike the font at Pitsford, Northants



Fig. 2.—Font at Winsters.

(which has a ledge), it possesses one hollowed out in the same manner as the font itself.” Mr. Smith calls attention to “the somewhat rare device of a ‘salamander,’ or species of dragon-like lizard,” and to the ornamentation of the fleur-de-lys. The latter is interesting in that it was the favourite design upon the Norman coinage of England, and yet almost unknown upon our Saxon money. It may be added that the particular form

of the fleur, as embossed on the font, seems to have been popular towards the close of the reign of Henry I and in that of Stephen.

II.—The font at Winster is peculiar in form, and its illustration will convey a better idea of its appearance than any detailed description. According to Mr. Smith, it is of the Transitional Norman period of architecture, and its probable date 1200.



Fig. 3.—Font at Ashbourne.

III.—The font at Ashbourne is a very good example of the Early English period, and “the most probable date is 1241, for that is the year in which the church was dedicated to S. Oswald, of which only the chancel remains in the Early English style.”

IV.—The font at Bakewell is octagonal in form, and “affords a remarkable illustration of the work of the Decorated period.” According to Dr. Cox (*Notes on Churches of Derbyshire*)

the figures sculptured in the panels represent S. Paul, S. Peter, Edward the Confessor, or David, S. Augustine, a figure with scroll, S. John the Baptist, a figure which might be any saint, and S. Chad.

V.—The font at Tideswell belongs to the Perpendicular period, and Mr. Smith adds that the church has one of the earliest Perpendicular towers in the country. He tells us the story of the restoration of the font by the late rector, Canon



Fig. 4.—Font at Bakewell.

Andrew, who discovered it “turned upside down in a rubbish heap,” which reminds us of that of the Smalley font, told in a previous page of this volume. “On the middle panel is an open book, on the left a chalice, and on the right an uncharged shield. All the other sides have various devices on them.” Mr. Smith would seem to have relied for his descriptions upon his excellent photographs, as otherwise he would no doubt have completed his details, and in the Youlgreave instance he says “there are three fleur-de-lys, as will be seen from the

illustration," whereas, if memory does not betray us, there are but two fleurs, for the third space is occupied by a figure of much archæological interest.



Fig. 5.—Font at Tideswell.*



Fig. 6.—Leaden Font at Ashover.

VI.—The font at Ashover. “This font of the Norman period is made of lead, and is one of the twenty-nine now in existence

* For the loan of this block we are indebted to the Rev. J. M. J. Fletcher, Vicar of Tideswell.

in England. These lead fonts are all very similar. . . . The height is about 1 ft. and the diameter about 2 ft. Round the outside are twenty figures of men, all dressed alike, under precisely similar canopies, which run round in the form of an arcade." Its dimension, as 1 ft. 2 ins. and 1 ft. 11½ ins. respectively, and fuller details of this interesting relic of Derbyshire plumbery are given by Dr. Cox in Vol. IX. of this *Journal*, where he supplies a list of thirty leaden fonts in England, twenty-one of which he assigns to the Norman period.

Derbyshire has many fonts worthy of Mr. Le Blanc Smith's attention, and we trust that this selection is but the commencement of a series.